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COUNTRY: South West Africa

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Characteristics of Terrain

- Desert is the general characteristic of South West Africa, varying in degree from the hills of very soft barren, shifting sand found around Walvis Bay to the rolling country of Ovamboland covered with thick shrubbery, desert grasses and trees. Tsumeb is located on rocky ground over which tons of top soil were poured so the people could grow trees, grass and shrubbery. "Tsumeb", in Ovambo, means "green place". The surrounding terrain is rolling red clay covered with desert grasses, thorn trees -- particularly the "drambutu tree" -- and scrub brush. The country around Bakersfield, California is very much like South West Africa. Cross country traveling in an automobile is possible but very difficult. One must be prepared to knock down small trees and drive through thick brush. From Omaruru south the country becomes increasingly barren of the hardy grass patches and sandy; cross country traveling is just about impossible because of the soft sand.

Physical Characteristics of the Town

- The layout of Tsumeb is dictated by the old Jordan river bed. The river was redirected when the town was built and a park on either side forms the center of the town. On the eastern side of the river is the staff township, the mine and offices. On the western side is the company township, the stores and schools [see town sketch - Enclosure A]. All the buildings are made of brick, which, I believe, is made in the town. All streets in Tsumeb are hard surfaced asphalt and kept in good condition by the Tsumeb Corporation. This is the only town in South West Africa that has all paved streets, and one of three towns that has a sewage disposal plant and electricity.
- Completely surrounding the town and extending approximately 14 miles out is

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the huge company farm which is maintained with the most modern farm equipment, including electric milkers. All kinds of vegetables in season are grown on the farm and used in the company mess halls to feed the native laborers. The vegetables are also sold to the independent grocers in town to avoid having vegetables shipped in, which is very expensive, thus preventing an increase in living costs and wages. Eucalyptus trees are also grown on the farm to be used for mine timbers. The trees are excellent for this purpose because they grow straight, are very strong and never rot. I do not know how much acreage is given over to this purpose, but on a farm near Grootfontein I saw a dense, old eucalyptus forest that was much larger than the company grove. Cattle are also raised on the farm and are a cross between an Afrikaaner and a type of German stock. There are about 20 other large farms around Tsumeb owned by Afrikaners who raise cattle. Karakul is also raised on the ranches and is an industry second only to mining. Fishing, particularly lobster fishing at Walvis Bay, is the third major industry and farming is fourth.

Transportation

4. Prior to 1949 camels provided much of the transportation in South West Africa and were assigned the task of taking the mail up to Namutoni from Tsumeb. Now June 1953 all the towns are connected by dirt highways to other parts of the country. These highways, none of which is paved, are unusable from about September to March or April, because of the rains which cause flash floods that rush quickly to the ocean. This must be borne in mind in all discussions about the qualities of highways and the efficiency of the country's transportation system.
5. A very modern air-conditioned bus makes the trip from Tsumeb to Windhoek once or twice a week. The bus is just slightly smaller than the well-known Greyhound Company buses. Windhoek is the place where one entrains or emplanes for other parts of the world. The school children also go to high school at Windhoek after they have passed through the Tsumeb grade school system.
6. A single engine commercial plane comes from Windhoek Tuesday and Thursday with the mail. This plane also carries the few passengers leaving or arriving at Tsumeb and lands on a tiny grass field from where cattle often have to be herded.
7. The train comes to Tsumeb three times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, to bring in supplies and carry out ore to Walvis Bay. This railway runs to DeAar in South Africa where one changes to go to Rhodesia or elsewhere. The track is narrow gauge (two feet, I believe) from Tsumeb to Usakos and broad gauge (3' 6" ?) from Usakos to Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. The train is most primitive for passenger travel, but well maintained due to its great importance as a supply and ore carrier.

Communications

8. There are two telephone systems in Tsumeb. One of them is owned and operated by the Tsumeb Corporation and the other is maintained by the government. The company phone system covers the company and staff townships and the government system connects with the private business townships and other towns. The former is quite modern, even more so than that commonly used in the US, and uses the dial system. The latter is very obsolete, using a crank system. One cannot use the phone on the government system on Sundays because the phone office closes. There is also a government telegraph office that closes Saturday afternoons and Sundays.

Water Resources

9. The water supply for Tsumeb, for all purposes, is pumped directly from the company mine. Approximately 50 thousand gallons per day comes from the mine. The water for the company farm and for the cattle comes from two lakes north of town. Otjikoto, about 15 miles from town and Otjiginis,

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which is about 20 miles, are two deep holes about 100 yards across with perpendicular walls. Both lakes are supposedly bottomless, but Ojikoto has been found to be 290 feet deep. Two pumps are required to pump the water from these well-like holes to the surface of the ground where it is piped to the farm.

Power Supply

10. The power supply for Tsumeb's electric lights, refrigerators and other appliances is provided by generators in the company mine. I did not see these generators and can provide very little information on them, but I was told that they are of Swedish make originally intended for the USSR and somehow diverted to Tsumeb. I believe that Omaruru and Windhoek are the only other towns in South West Africa that have electricity. In the home, electricity is used only for the electric lights, refrigerators and some small appliances. All cooking is done on woodburning stoves, and the native servants do all the washing by hand.

Roads

11. As previously noted, all roads are impassable from September to March. Just prior to the rains the roads, from use, become very corrugated and very dusty. At this time automobile travel is limited to about 25 miles per hour. At other times of the year one can average about 45 miles per hour, but one must be on the lookout for cattle and wild game. The width of the road varies from sufficient space for four cars to pass one another to the width of two cars, apparently depending only on the enthusiasm of the scrapers. The roads are very simply made and maintained by the use of 40 government scrapers that scoop away the sand to a depth of about one foot. These scrapers are in constant use. I believe six scrapers are used on the road from Tsumeb to Walvis Bay, and about 11 scrapers between Tsumeb and Windhoek. There is only one bridge between Tsumeb and Walvis Bay aside from railroad bridges, and the roads are dug across the river beds.

City Government

12. In a previous report [redacted] there were 20 thousand natives living in Tsumeb. This was incorrect and the figure should be two thousand natives. Of the two thousand whites in Tsumeb 600 work for the mining company. These whites are either Germans or Afrikaans with the exception of three US families, seven Canadian families and three UK families, the heads of which are the supervisors of the mining company's departments.
13. The company supplies and maintains nearly all improvements in Tsumeb and makes some effort to control the city management committee with varying degrees of success. This committee is composed of a representative from the company, a representative from the private business community and two or three government representatives. This committee spends the biggest share of its time trying to persuade the company to finance various improvements.

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